

What is a portrait?

A portrait is a type of art of a person, usually focused on their face. A portrait might be of a historic person, a religious figure, or fictional character.



Face of Senwosret III,
circa 1878-1840 BCE,
Middle Kingdom Egypt
Metropolitan Museum of Art,
Open Access, Public Domain

Neil Armstrong, detail from
My Favorite American Hero
Made by multiple makers, USA, 1980
IQM 2012.015.0136



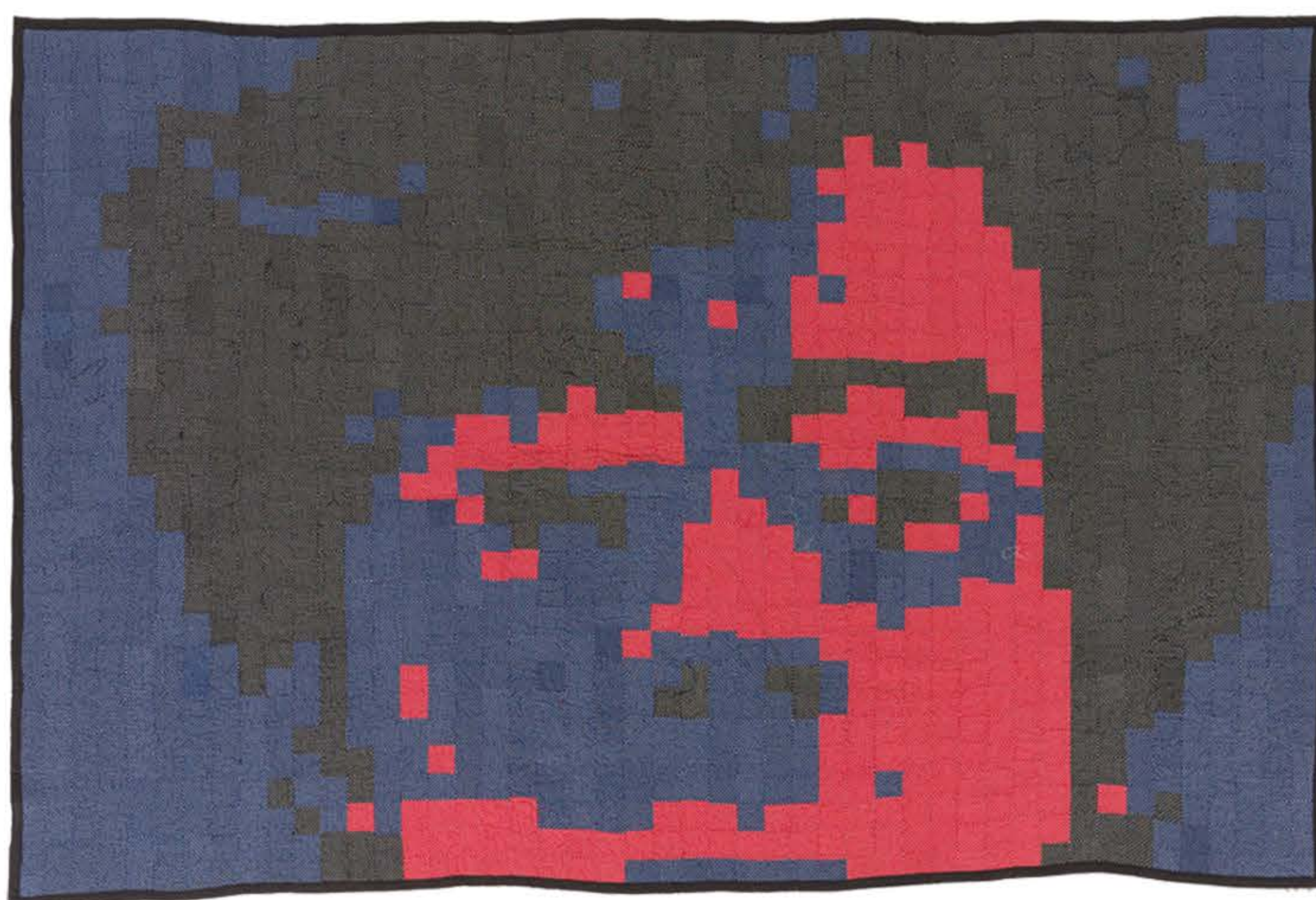
Portraits date back to at least the ancient Egyptians, and may date as far back as the ancient Sumerians, 4,000 years ago. Many historic examples were created for religious purposes, as memorials, to celebrate important achievements, or to document a nation's rulers.

Portraits appear in paintings, sculptures, coins, mosaics, pottery, rings, lockets and textiles. They help historians study the culture, clothing and social values of people in different times and places.

Portraits can be created in any artform. While many historic portraits show the rich and powerful of a certain time and place, artists throughout history have also created portraits of the people around them, including their friends and family, and themselves. When a portrait shows the artist who created it, it's called a self-portrait.



Portrait of the Quilter as a Young Man
by John Mangiapane, 1981
IQM 2015.012.0001



Blue Skies by Luke Haynes, 2002
Made in Weaverville, North Carolina, USA
IQM 2015.038.0001

Quiltmakers make portraits in many different styles and for many different reasons. Some use embroidery, or fabric-printed photographs. Others use piecing, or appliqué. Some quiltmakers enjoy creating realistic portraits, while others use simpler or more cartoonish styles.



Make your own textile portrait art!

You can make your own fabric portrait with fabric, a pencil, fabric scissors, and glue or a gluestick.

You can make your portrait in any style you like, using simple shapes, or more realistic designs. Your figure might have lots of hair or be bald. They might have eyes in different sizes, or different colors. Maybe they have their mouth open, like they're singing, or closed. Maybe they are showing their teeth, laughing, or maybe they're angry. Play with your design until you like it!

- 1 To get started, choose your background fabric.
- 2 Then choose fabrics for your figure's face, eyes, nose, mouth, hair and any clothing or accessories they might wear.
- 3 Draw and cut out the face, neck and features you want to include.
- 4 Arrange the face and neck on your base fabric. Glue it down when you like how it looks.
- 5 Arrange the features. Try different options until you like it.
- 6 Then glue them down.
- 7 Cut out or add any embellishments. These could be hair clips, glasses, earrings, clothing or any 3D elements you like.
- 8 Finally, if you wish, fold the edges of your background fabric to the back and glue it down to create a finished border.

